Governor of Delhi, Chief Minister of Delhi SC/ST Commission, Chief Commissioner, Income Tax and Sales Tax and Prime Minister;

(b) If so, what action Director General, ICCR has taken on the basis of these letters;

(c) if no action has been taken, the reasons thereof; and

(d) whether Government have investigated into the nexus between Balmer Lawrie & Co. and ICCR on the basis of media reports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE) : (a) Some MPs had written letters in 1997 to the Hon'ble Vice-President and Prime Minister alleging corruption in the ICCR during the period 1993—95.

(b) to (d) All these allegations of corruption including the alleged nexus between Balmer Lawrie & Co. and ICCR were investigated. These investigations were conducted by a high-powered Committee of two Vice-Presidents of the Governing Body of the ICCR, viz. an eminent intellectual and a senior MP. The allegations were also investigated by the Central Vigilance Commission. None of the allegations were found to have any substance and the Central Vigilance Commission advised closure of the cases. Further, the accounts of the Council for the period 1993—95 had been audited by the Comptroller & Auditor General of India and no instance of corruption was brought out in the audit reports. Following these allegations of corruption by some Hon'ble MPs in 1997, and press reports containing similar allegations, a fresh audit was conducted in 1997-98 for the period in question. Again no instance of corruption was brought to the notice of the Council by the Audit Party.

Enquiry into ICCR affairs

4035. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether he is aware of news-items captioned "culture of corruption". 'Scandalous splurge by ICCR' "MPs demand probe into ICCR Affairs" and "Indian Council for Cultural Regret" which appeared in the Pioneer on the 15th, 16th, 17th and 26th July, 1997;

(b) whether any CBI or Vigilance enquiry has been ordered on the basis of these media reports;

(c) if so, what is the outcome of the enquiry and what action Government have taken against those corrupt official; and

(d) if not, what prevented Government from doing so?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) All the allegations of corruption contained in these news items were investigated. These investigations were conducted by a high-powered committee of two Vice-Presidents of the Governing Body of the ICCR, viz. an eminent intellectual and a senior MP. The allegations were also investigated by the Central Vigilance Commission. None of the allegations were found to have any substance and the Central Vigilance Commission advised closure of the cases. Further, the accounts of the Council for the period 1993—95 had been audited by the Comptroller & Auditor General of India and no instance of corruption was brought out in the audit reports. Following these allegations of corruption which had appeared in sections of the Press, a fresh audit was conducted in 1997-98 for the period in question. Again no instance of corruption was brought to the notice of the Council by the Audit Party.

(d) Does not arise.

Economic ties with Maldives

4036. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to establish better economic ties with Maldives;

(b) whether the President of Maldives who visited India recently has discussed the need to establish better economic cooperation between both the countries; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Government pay close attention to the development of cordial and cooperative links